

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 31, 33-41, 54, 56-64, 66-70, 72-88, and 90-113 are pending in this application, with claims 31, 54, 64, 70, 76, and 91 being independent claims. Claims 91-105 have been allowed. Claims 40, 41, 61, 62, 80, 81, and 87-90 have been withdrawn from consideration as being allegedly drawn to non-elected species. Applicant proposes canceling claims 32, 55, 65, 71, and 89 and amending claims 31, 54, 64, 70, 76, and 90. No new matter will be entered by these proposed amendments.

Applicant takes this opportunity to thank the Examiner for indicating that dependent claims 32 and 71 contain allowable subject matter. In view of the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, however, Applicant believes that dependent claims 55, 65, and 89 also contain allowable subject matter since they contain similar recitations as that of claims 32 and 71.

Accordingly, Applicant has amended each of independent claims 31, 54, 64, 70, and 76 to include the allowable subject matter previously recited in the corresponding dependent claims 32, 55, 65, 71, and 89 in order to place all pending claims in condition for allowance. Thus, independent claims 31, 54, 64, 70, 76, and 91, and their respective dependent claims, should be allowable.

Since generic claims 31, 54, and 76 are allowable, Applicant respectfully requests that claims 40 and 41 (which depend from allowable independent claim 31), claims 61 and 62 (which depend from allowable independent claim 54), and claims 80, 81, 87, 88, and 90 (which depend from allowable independent claim 76), all of which had been withdrawn from consideration, be rejoined to this application and be allowed at least by virtue of their dependency from allowable independent claims 31, 54, and 76.

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The final Office Action contains a rejection of claims 31, 33-39, 54-60, 63-70, 72-79, 82-86, and 106-113 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) based on Taylor (U.S. Patent No. 6,544,291). Applicant does not necessarily agree with this rejection or the characterizations made in the Office Action, but notes that the rejection should no longer be applicable since all of the claims recite allowable subject matter.

Applicant respectfully requests that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered, placing all pending claims 31, 33-41, 54, 56-64, 66-70, 72-88, and 90-113 in condition for allowance. Applicant also submits that the proposed amendments of claims 31, 54, 64, 70, 76, and 90 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships were previously claimed.

It is respectfully submitted that all pending claims 31, 33-41, 54, 56-64, 66-70, 72-88, and 90-113 are in condition for allowance. Therefore, timely issuance of a Notice of Allowability is respectfully requested.

The final Office Action of September 12, 2003 contains a number of statements and characterizations regarding the claims and the related art. However, Applicant declines to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action, regardless of whether it is addressed above.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned (202-448-4140) if a telephone conversation might advance prosecution of the application.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

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Respectfully submitted,

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